

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 09992 281142Z
ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 SCS-06
IO-14 CA-01 FSE-00 /060 W
-----120919 290717Z /11

R 280952Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY DJAKARTA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
SECSTATE WASHDC 2039
AMEMBASSY SEOUL

UNCLAS HONG KONG 9992

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CGEN
SUBJECT: AIRLINE BOOKINGS TO THE U S

REF: MANILA 12871 (NOTAL)

1. REFTEL UNDERSCORES RAPIDLY GROWING PROBLEM IN HONG KONG, MANILA
AND, POSSIBLY OTHER ADDRESSEE POSTS, OVER UNAVAILABILITY OF
SPACE FOR TRAVELLERS BOUND FOR THE U S. WE HAVE RECEIVED THE
PAST FORTNIGHT AN EVER INCREASING NUMBER OF TELEPHONE CALLS
AND VISITS FROM U S CITIZENS STRANDED IN HONG KONG OWING
TO AN ABSENCE OF SPACE ON U S BOUND FLIGHTS. MANY SUCH
TRAVELERS ARE IN POSSESSION OF DISCOUNT TICKETS VALID ONLY
FOR TRAVEL ON SINGLE CARRIER AND, THEREFORE, CANNOT BE ENDORSED
OVER TO ANOTHER CARRIER. PROBLEM IS COMPOUNDED BY FACT THIS
IS SEASON FOR LARGE SCALE TOURIST AND STUDENT TRAVEL
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TO U S FROM HONG KONG. MOST OF THESE TRAVELERS HOLD
TICKETS ON CHINA AIR LINES, KOREAN AIR LINES AND
PHILIPPINE AIRLINES, ALL OF WHOM SELL TICKETS THROUGH
TRAVEL AGENTS AT CONSIDERABLE DISCOUNT OVER FIXED
IATA FARE OF \$656 FROM HONG KONG TO WEST COAST. FOR THIS
REASON, THESE CARRIERS ARE BOOKED UP FOR WEEKS,
WITH PHILIPPINE AIRLINES TELLING LOCAL WOULD-BE

PASSENGERS THEY MUST WAIT UNTIL EARLY OCTOBER BEFORE
THEY CAN HOPE TO GET SPACE.

2. SPACE TO U S VIA EUROPE IS ALMOST AS TIGHT. AT
PRESENT, WE HAVE 9 STRANDEES ON SWISSAIR WHO HAVE BEEN
TOLD THEY MUST WAIT UNTIL AUG 17 IF THEY HOPE TO
TRAVEL AS A GROUP. SPOKESWOMAN FOR THE GROUP SAID
THEY ARE RUNNING LOW ON FUNDS AND INQUIRED IF CONSULATE
GENERAL COULD EXTEND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. WHEN IT
WAS SUGGESTED THAT THEY CONTACT FAMILY OR FRIENDS,
REPLY WAS THEY WISHED TO BORROW MONEY FROM CONSULATE
GENERAL AND REPAY AFTER RETURN HOME.

3. TWO OTHER CALLERS ASKED THAT CONSULATE GENERAL DEMAND
OF CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD THAT PAN AMERICAN SEND
OUT SEVERAL EXTRA FLIGHTS TO RELIEVE THE BACKLOG.
TO ENSURE THAT ALL FLIGHTS DEPART FULLY LOADED, CARRIERS
ARE OVERBOOKING, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN SEVERAL UNHAPPY
SCENES AT AIRPORT WHEN WOULD-BE PASSENGERS HOLDING
CONFIRMED RESERVATIONS WERE DENIED PASSAGE DUE TO
OVERBOOKING. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT PANAM HAS EQUIPMENT
TO SPARE FOR THIS PURPOSE, BUT DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO
DISCUSS MATTER WITH CAB. EVEN IF EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE
FOR SUPPLEMENTAL FLIGHTS, POSSIBLY TERMS OF U.S./U.K.
BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT MIGHT PRECLUDE SUCH FLIGHTS.

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4. IN THE EVENT THAT STRANDED TRAVELERS FIND THEMSELVES
WITHOUT FUNDS AND, PENDING RECEIPT OF SAME FROM U S.,
CAN WE EXPEND FUNDS UNDER AUTHORITY SET FORTH IN 7 FAM
375 TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR RELIEF? WE HOPE SITUATION
WILL NOT MATERIALIZE, BUT IF IT DOES, WE DESIRE
DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL IN ADVANCE.
SHOESMITH

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